



THE VISION OF A CITY

AND OTHER POEMS



HENRY DUMONT



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The Vision of a City

and other poems

(First Volume)

By J. M. W. Turner, R.S.A.
London, 1840

The Vision of a City

and other poems

by

Henry Dumont

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The Whitaker and Ray Co.

San Francisco

1907

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1907

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*Dedicated
to my friend
George Sterling*

*Your feet have held to Beauty's way
However long or dark the night;
Within your lantern's guiding ray
I follow, grateful for the light.*

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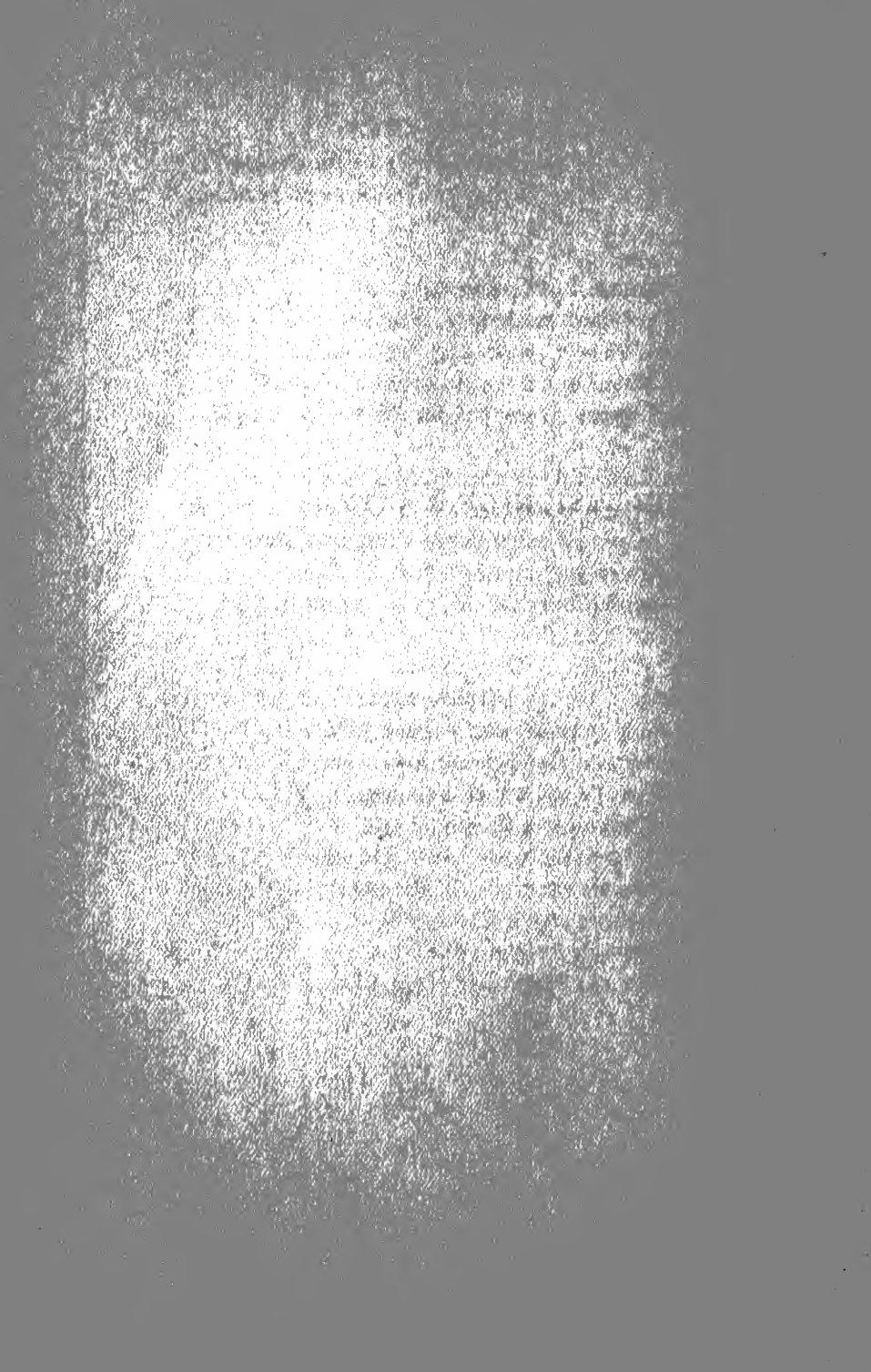
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THE VISION OF A CITY



THE VISION OF A CITY.

"To each the city of his dream."

—George Sterling.

I.

Methought in dream I stood upon a hill,
A verdant hill o'erlaid with tree and vine
Whose fruit and flower, scorning press or still,
Unclosed, and filled my breath with airy wine.
The leaves and grass were bright with Morning's
tears;
The buds were held of bees too blest to hum,
And as my footsteps wandered with no plan,
The tall herbs menaced with their shining spears.
To this new spot my feet untired had come,
I know not how, for here my dream began.

II.

And in my dream I gently pressed aside
A blossom-bearing branch, and peered below.
Upon the vale's green floor, level and wide,
A city lay, with walls as white as snow,
In softest vapor veiled,—a lucent shield
That balked my prying eyes, and hid away
The strength and splendor which should govern there.
Before the gates there lay a flowery field,
And over it, as though to greet the day,
A host of maidens ran with fluttering hair.

III.

And soon the vapor vanished, swept afar
By breezes flowing down the mountain sides,
Tasting of snows, and singing of that star
Whose light a beacon is on morning tides.
The veil uplifting, marble-white and pure
The vision gleamed, a Dian mute in stone.
O'er hills behind the walls the mist was rolled;
Round cliffs that would the passing clouds allure,
And as the sunlight on the city shone
The white of dome and tower turned to gold.

IV.

And music swept the air, as rising late,
The birds released delightful dreams in song;
While winding calls from trumpets at the gate
Awoke the echoes lying overlong.
The city and the vale arose and stirred
From shadow, as the God of Day entwined
His fingers with the maiden Earth's, unseen,
And over all, Life's glowing voice was heard.
At peace, afar, the ocean gleamed behind
The folded hills, whose purple framed its green.

V.

Then slowly down I wandered to the gate—
 The great stone gate with arch high overhead,
 And knocked,—beat on the bars in scorn of fate,
 And cried: “Unbolt, and let me enter!” Dead
 Was the voice that struck the massive door,
 And dying fell the echo with no sound
 In answer. With faint hope, and lest I bide
 A stranger to the joys within, once more
 I cried; and lo! a footfall on the ground;
 The bolts drew back, the door swung open wide.

VI.

My chill limbs trembled in the morning air;
 I stood a hesitant, uncertain thing —
 The vision real, I a spectre there,
 Faint, faltering at the breach; nor could I bring
 My stubborn voice to raise its call again.
 To lovers of the day this beautiful,
 Sweet realm of light might dark have ever been,
 A vanished, untold tale, forgotten when
 The tongue most wished to speak, did not a call
 Direct mine ear to some clear voice within.

VII.

I entered. Oh, the beauty of the place,
Beyond all power of wakened eyes to hold
Or words to tell. The Dream-God's golden vase
Had broken, blending perfume with its gold.
There in a garden of the Gods I stood;
A thousand roses bowed them at my feet,
And every rose was bright with myriad eyes,
And every eye was prayerful 'neath its hood
Of leaves. Where were the nymphs with offerings
meet
For such a day in such a paradise?

VIII.

A waterfall made audible the air
With endless sighing for some vanished love
That long ago was musical and fair,—
Long lost to river, rock, and shadowed grove.
The simple scent of thyme and mignonette
Crept to the heart, while on the grateful head
The pine tree poured baptismal fragranc y.
No otherwhere had so much beauty met
To grace a pathway man was meant to tread,
And him from bitter melancholy free.

IX.

To me it would have been no great surprise
 Did I behold an altar on the green
 Pouring insistent incense to the skies,
 With Flora smiling from a leafy screen
 Approving; did I hear believing man
 Chanting harmonious tribute unto her
 Whose breath renews earth's garlands ere they die;
 Or did I hear the self-made pipes of Pan
 Make shrill complaining on near hillsides where
 Young shepherds with their flocks went leisuring by.

X.

Could this be Greece, and these her altared groves?
 Her temples resurrected, or untouched
 By Time's relentless fingers? Jove's
 Majestic features from oblivion clutched,
 And men still holding wholesome faith in Gods?
 Did King Æolus still maintain his isle?
 His breath make music in these choired trees,
 Or whisper still through Ceres' golden rods?
 Did Psyche mourn, or Aphrodite smile,
 Or Zephyrus still dally on these leas?

XI.

Had mankind turned unto its infancy
To waken new upon a greening world,
When Neptune drove to shore a younger sea,
Ere Saturn from his lofty throne was hurled?
Was I then breathing when the sons of men
Saw Nature beautiful, and crowned her so
With garlands woven of their hearts' delight?
Was I in midst of budding Eden when
The feet of Time moved measureless and slow,
And waited on the senses day and night?

XII.

Ah, happy time! And happy must they be
Who have the gift of dream; whose favored eyes
Behold what dreamless orbs may never see:
An olden glory 'neath the youngest skies;
An oread where each little stream hath birth;
A nymph concealed behind each laurel trunk;
A satyr's shadow near each dropping cone;
A Ceres near each fruitful spot of earth;
A Triton blowing where each wave hath sunk
With sadness in its slow-dissolving tone.

XIII.

Thus musing, near the gate I stood awhile,
Till on my arm a hand was gently laid,
And in my face another's face did smile.
A kind voice beckoned, and my feet obeyed.
Adonis might have been less fair than he
Whose youthful beauty met my charmed eyes
With potent speech to waken and inspire.
A crown of olives pressed his brow, care-free;
His eyes but mirrored back the dreaming skies;
His voice came echo from Apollo's lyre.

XIV.

Black as Night's star-lit rosary his hair
Let loose upon his shoulders like a wave
Just turning, rich with sunshine and with air,
And crowning what the Gods forgetful gave,—
A beauty matching equally their own,
Which held mine eyes its steadfast eremites,
Mute worshippers, devotedly employed.
His splendid mien, his tongue's delightful tone,
Securely curtained other sounds and sights,
And made all else seem meaningless and void.

XV.

His sandaled feet were noiseless as he led
Along the city's green and sunlit street,
Bordered on either side by roses red
That hid a wall of mouldering stone,—ah, sweet
Their greeting to my nostrils wide! There rose
Behind the flowery borders of the way
Tall pillars hewn of stone once lofty-hilled,
Standing huge sentinels in firm repose,—
Yet impotent to guard, as, day by day,
Loved voices at their feet were stolen, stilled.

XVI.

Once, as we passed an archway on the right,
I saw a stag, with eyes and nostrils keen,
And antlers jewelled with the dew, take fright,
Leap from the ferns, and vanish in the green;
And on the left the figure of a youth
In marble cast, holding in both his hands
A hammer lifted high, while on his arm
A pair of whispering doves sat mouth to mouth.
No lust for blood proclaimed its red demands,
And stag and doves alike were free from harm.

XVII.

Then from behind a fragrant garden wall
A voice rose singing, lifting to the skies
A hymn to Beauty, grateful as the call
That greets the morning when the larks arise:

I.

“O Beauty, Goddess ever true!
Our eyes have daily need of Thee,
And nightly see
Thy patient face
In the moon’s place,
O Goddess true!

II.

“Thine is the light that daily dies
From Evening’s eyes,
And smiles to earth
At Morning’s birth;
And Thine the shadow on the grass
When zephyrs pass,
And swan-clouds swim athwart the blue.

III.

“Thy golden hair
Streams everywhere
When Dawn, half clad,
Hath swiftly bade
Wan Night adieu.

IV.

"Thy song rings from the green hillside
When birds arise;
Its echo dies
Far on the tide.
Thy voice is found
Where reeds suspire,
And every sound
At morn or evening from the ground
Chords with Thy lyre.

V.

"O Goddess! Roselike is Thy breath
When life is high;
And even to unsensèd Death
Faint violets sigh
Of Thee,
And on the faded cheek
Thy hands, pale lilies, lie.
Ah, verily,
Thy touch hath made Death beautifully meek."

So on the pleased air the carol fled,—
A frail, delinquent, over-zealous thing,
Freed of its cage, with message overdue,
And distant, to the azure overhead
It soared, with fading though unwearied wing,
And soon was lost where mountains meet the blue.

XVIII.

Across the open courts, with native ease,
A flock of happy women, free and fair,
With robe and ribbon fluttering to the breeze,
Slow-drifted as a cloud on calming air.
And one held in her hand a silent lute,
With roses garlanded, entwined with fern;
And one bent tranced eyes upon a book;
And one bore high a basket of ripe fruit;
And one embraced a glittering golden urn,—
All drifting gradual to some favored nook.

XIX.

I stood and gazed with far enraptured eyes;
All motionless I stood with gentle stare,
As some late-comer stands in Paradise,
And turns mute eyes on angels winged and fair.
I longed to follow with consuming speed,
To near their arbor as they sang, or read
Some romance flavoring a far-off land,
And then to kneel, with passion purified,
And kiss the hair upon each lovely head,
And hold each eye with mine, and touch each hand.

XX.

They vanished seaward, feathers on Time's stream,
Leaving the aching heart without content.
Ah, so they ever ache who feed on dream,
For whom the actual lacks nourishment.
But this same hunger is a pleasant pain
That leads the sense to vaulted galleries
Where dwell the rapt astronomers of soul,
Who, losing day, a pictured darkness gain;
To whose accustomed ears roll faery seas,
On whose far-reaching sight strange planets roll.

XXI.

A monument to Patience stood my guide
While thus I dallied like a love-sick swain;
Till pleasantly returning to my side,
He took my arm and led me on again.
And, looking up, I saw some graybeard men
Descend a marble stairway, worn and old.
Touching this sight I questioned him who led.
"Ah, this our Senate is, the guardian
"Of all our joys, of all Time's coffers hold
"The living, and a sentry of the dead.

XXII.

"A hand for all the helpless, and an eye
"That sees more clearly for the mist in it;
"An outpost in a wilderness, whose sky
"Is by great monitory beacons lit,
"Burning serene on many a fearful height;
"A tongue of flame along Time's highway set
"To cry out to the traveller this truth:
"*'The Past is but a shadow born of light*
"*'Cast by the Future on Today.'* And yet,
"Brave lamps to us are these, our elder youth."

XXIII.

"I would a word with these gray Senators,
"If no provision of your code be wronged
"Thereby." He smiled, and pointed to the doors.
"Let us go in," he said, "the hall is thronged."
So we went in. A silence filled the place
As on a listening night some forest glen
When leaves wax firm and wooing winds grow meek.
Then midst of all, with time-illuminated face
Gleaming athwart a silver sea of men,
An elder Senator arose to speak.

XXIV.

A stalwart man was he despite his age.
The years had surely brought but good to him.
Time had not set upon his face her gauge
In wrinkles, neither were his blue eyes dim.
And, as he spake, in him an ardor burned
Whose flame enkindled all his listeners,
And roused them rapt to hang upon his tongue.
His voice fell glowing on their hearts, and turned
Their blood to molten deeds; his words were spurs
That, touching tender places, bit and stung.

XXV.

What of this world could tax these worldly-wise?
What of this hour could tear them from the past?
What of the day could turn their nightward eyes?
What cry of life could wake these dead at last?
Had some insatiate of other isle
Broke in upon their peace with armed bands,
And trod their necks while they were prone with fear?
Or did their underlings, helpless a while,
Confront them now with bold, unjust demands?
Why should these mouldering wicks burn hotly here?

XXVI.

"Let us withdraw from this gray company,"
A friendly whisper to my hearing stole;
"Let us go down unto the tranquil sea
"Whose silence stills the hunger of the soul;
"Let us imbibe some little of her calm,
"Before her great quiescence droop to rest,
"And at her folded feet a moment lie,
"Where we may listen to a seaward psalm
"As, veiled behind the curtains of the west,
"The couch of dreaming Neptune wanders by."

XXVII.

So we went down to the green highway's edge
Where, far below us, slept the evening sea;
And midway intervened a shadowed ledge
Of rock, and reed, and shell, and wind-bent tree.
My guide led down a path with coral strewn;
I followed, palpitant with gentle fears,
Until I stood secure where seamew flies.
There, on the ledge, an altar had been hewn
To the great sea-God. As I stared, strange tears,
With sudden flood, made dim my raptured eyes.

XXVIII.

For never had I hoped thus to behold,
With unpurged eyes, so beautiful a thing.
Here was a people, rich with more than gold,
Feeling a beauty which no wealth can bring.
I gazed across the vast and silent blue
Till sudden, like a wave, Neptune arose
With dripping hair, and shoulders bared and bright;
And over him a seabird lightly flew,
Crying against the moment's deep repose,—
Then, as it came, the wonder fled the sight.

XXIX.

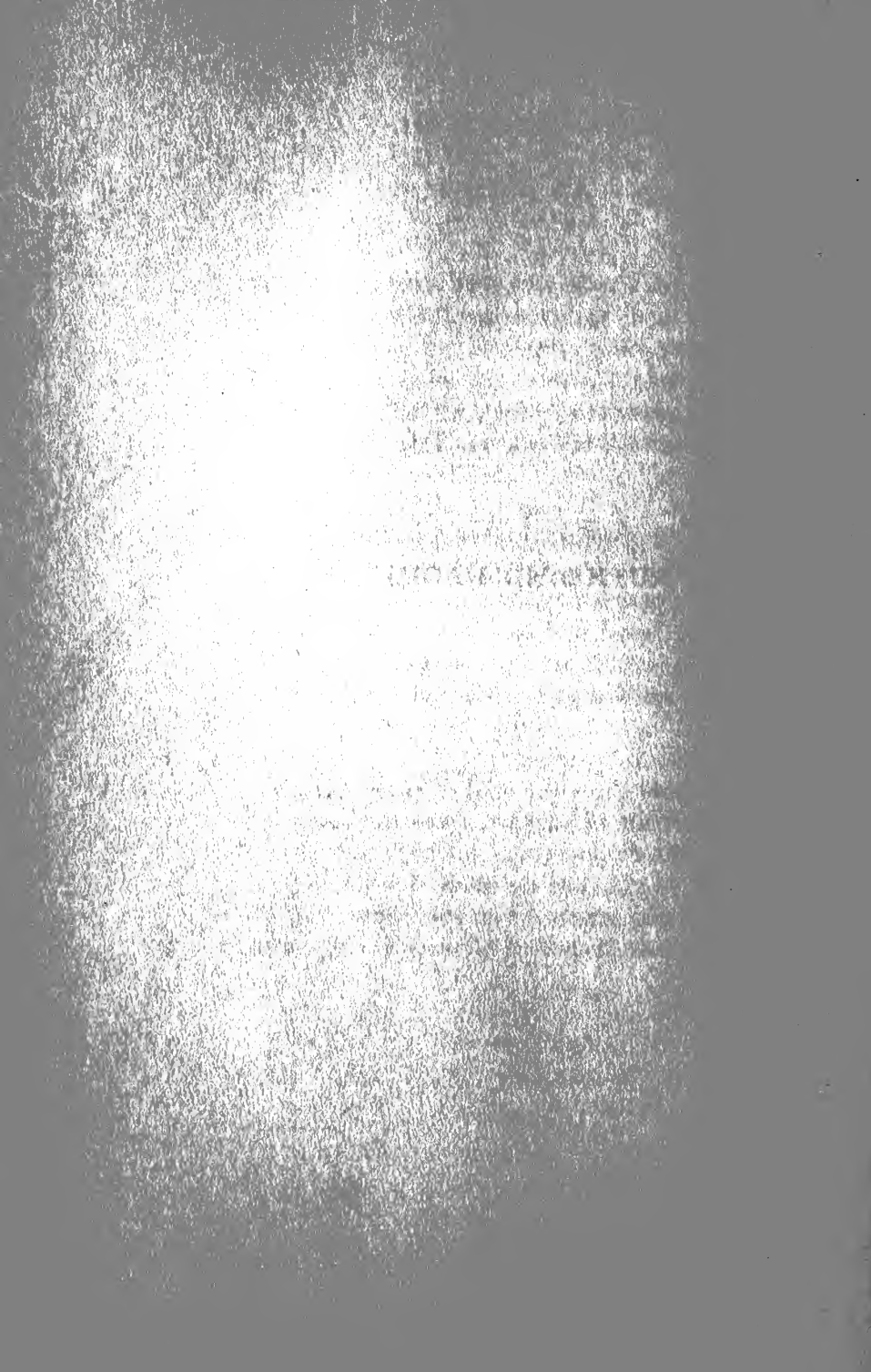
Alas! Too soon it faded,—like a light
That, blown to flicker by some heedless blast,
Throws forth protesting shadows on the night,
And yields to greedy darkness at the last.
As some frail diver in a jewelled stream
Has almost in his grasp the wanted prize,
And then must up to light for larger air,
So felt I, toiling in the tides of dream,
Which deeper grew, encumbering mine eyes,
Till wholly vanished was the vision fair.

XXX.

Then back to earth, the ravage of the mart,
The dreary dun of modern city street,
Whose ways one cannot tread with easeful heart,
Whose shadows hold the mind no safe retreat;
And back again where Peace has no command,
Where weariness and palsy fret the age,
Where play is never glad, and toil is pain,
Where caged Mortality lays heavy hand
Upon the aspiring spirit, ere it gauge
Its flight,—and pinions beat in vain!

March, 1906.

RUTH AND NAOMI



RUTH AND NAOMI.

AN IDYL.

I.

Gaunt Famine wandered naked through the land;
Its parchèd fields no greening thing would grow;
Its people, starving, turned an idle hand,
For useless would it be to dig or sow.
Beyond the mountains fertile streams might flow,
And thitherward fared many a hopeful band.

II.

A company of pilgrims, lifeward bound,
With ashen faces and rude garments rent,
Continual in prayer of piteous sound,
Up from the burnt and barren fields they went;
And many a feeble back, full-weary, bent
Between its burden and the fevered ground.

III.

At length there came the goal of eager eyes,—
A valley, steeped in verdure, sweet and fair,
Where sycamore and cedar mingled sighs,
And breath of vine and fig made rich the air.
The willow and acacia murmured there,
And palm leaves trembled 'gainst alluring skies.

IV.

From hilltops shadowed by a friendly cloud
They saw where cattle in deep herbage grazed;
With rapture in their hearts they cried aloud,
And to their Guide a grateful hymn they raised.
With hungered, though unlustful eyes, they gazed—
Gazed long upon the gift and were not proud.

V.

For they had known content with little care;
Were favored if the day were not to fail;
If Night were hidden by Dawn's golden hair,
And Pain's horizon broken by a sail.
Knowing that without prayer their hands were frail,
They could not vaunt an answer to their prayer.

VI.

Down to the vale a joyous way they made,
With laughter born of lost delights new-found.
By tender grasses carpeting the glade
Their aching feet were sheltered from the ground.
Beside a bubbling brooklet's course they wound,
And soon were in the midst of cooling shade.

VII.

Along the river banks they pitched their tents,
And lay all day upon the soothing earth,
And reared unto their God rude monuments,
And found once more the flattery of mirth.
For them there lurked no danger now, nor dearth,
And no one bargained them for fees or rents.

VIII.

The land was theirs, the honey and the dew,
The wine and milk their mother earth had stored,
From which these famished ones large portions drew
And with each breath did glorify their Lord;
Their faith grew firmer in His ancient Word,
And He was still their Father, so they knew.

IX.

Among the rest breathed gentle *Naomi*,
All unassailed by doubts or chilling fears,
Who questioned not, nor sealed a bitter "Why?"
Nor found herself untouched by others' tears.
Rich with the sunshine and the dew of years,
She grew unchanged beneath the altered sky.

X.

Frail hour of gentler days, knowing no call
Of poverty, nor any need to stray
From easeful paths, she fled her couchèd hall
On alien sod defenceless limbs to lay,—
Flown like a dove where greedy falcons prey,
And snares lie hid where guileless feet may fall.

XI.

The sun's most golden light had shone for her,
In other days, in other lands, we know,
And love had been her constant minister,
Beneath whose care rich tenderness did grow;
On her fair brow caressing winds did blow,
While every thought grew daily tenderer.

XII.

Though she had come of rich ancestral blood,
Was rich in many houses and wide lands,
With many servants waiting on her nod,
And countless blessings weighing her frail hands,
She stood a beacon on the barren sands,
When lonely hopes were melting in the flood.

XIII.

Ancestral halls, and lands a country wide,
Bright gold in coffers, silks, and diamonds,
Cannot avail to stay the whelming tide,
When wild Calamity hath burst its bonds,—
When fixèd Confidence at length desponds,
And Doubt reigns proudly where 'twas once denied!

XIV.

The courage of the many made retreat
When general ruin stared away their pride;
While they were bowed by pitiless defeat
She stood where only conquerors abide,
Buoyed by those hopes that pain the human side,
And move the few believing hearts to beat.

XV.

An aged husband and two sons had she,—
This noble woman of the hallowed past.
Though they had known the taste of luxury,
The youths took gratefully what fate had cast;
The aged man was far too frail to fast,
And dropt away of painless malady.

XVI.

For many days these hungry youths were fed,
And every aching need full satisfied.
But aye their patience ravelled to a thread,
And longings old surged on them like a tide.
Each eve they yearned where western glory died,
And slept, on golden fancies pillowèd.

XVII.

They dreamt of days when golden were the fields
With rye, and barley, and all sunny grain,
When every youth a scythe or sickle wields
Against the coming of destroying rain.
And as they dreamt their hearts were filled with pain
So far were they from what sweet memory yields.

XVIII.

They languished as young vines that will not grow
Whose roots are laid where seasons burn the same.
Awake, they vented syllables of woe,
And with sad hearts they to their mother came,
Thinking on her soft bosom to reclaim
Such comfort as Time bade them long forego.

XIX.

"Mother," they said, "we sicken at delays;
"Our spirits droop as lilies reft of Spring;
"Our feet are set in unfamiliar ways,
"Barren to us, though lined with blossoming;
"Our tongues are all too passionless to sing,—
"We have an aching for the olden days!

XX.

" We hunger for the land that gave us birth,
" From whose sweet breast we were by famine
torn,—
" For aye to us the fairest spot of earth ;
" Our hearts are hungry for her, and we mourn,—
" We mourn for vanished days amid the corn,
" For voices full of music and of mirth !

XXI.

" We need the sower's happy song to cheer ;
" We miss the reaper's happier refrain.
" Ah, must we suffer here another year?—
" Another weary year must we remain,
" While every hour is but a pulse of pain
" Beating sharp way to a betraying tear?"

XXII.

Their woeful plaint besieged no sealèd ears.
The heart of the true mother is as snow
Before the heat of her loved offspring's tears,—
And *Naomi* must stop the bitter flow.
She kissed their brows and soothed the sense of woe,
And with soft speech pushed back the press of fears.

XXIII.

" My sons," she said, "this weeping wounds me sore ;
" This piteous pleading gives me cruel pain.
" Though greedy famine stares while we implore,
" Our faith should not permit us to complain.
" The Lord *will* visit the old fields again,
" And we shall go and dwell therein once more."

XXIV.

As darkness falls upon the fiery day,
 Veiling its glare from eyes that tender be,
 So fell these words upon the youths, and they
 Were comforted; for love had made them see
 That lamentation greatens misery,
 While faith and hope but lessen and allay.

XXV.

So for a time they lingered in content,
 And passion languished, lacking flame or food.
 But soon strange, new desires grew eloquent
 While Nature's wine fermented in the blood;
 And soon they felt a fierce and fiery flood
 Take head within them, crying out for vent.

XXVI.

Ah, what could draw them safe through passion's
 fire?
 What potent hand could break its tyranny?
 What language could their captive souls inspire,
 And tell them how to win sweet liberty?
 Love,—only Love could teach them to be free,
 And lend them wings to soar above desire!

XXVII.

And Love spake unto each. The still small voice
 Came through the veil of tumult to their hearts,
 Saying "Elude the Demon that destroys;
 "Flee far the poison of his viewless darts;
 "Shun shameless Affectation and her arts,
 "And simple Beauty make thy deathless choice!"

XXVIII.

They chose, and found the ways of love were sweet,
And their full hearts were grateful to the core.
To paths of beauty love enticed their feet,
And life held richer meaning than before.
Love led on heavenly paths,—they knew no more,
Nor where along the way God's hand might greet.

XXIX.

O Muse of Song! give power to my pen!
Awake what sense of beauty may repose
Within the balmy chambers of my brain
That there may come, the while the dull ink flows,
A fragrant whisper from the Tongue that knows
How these young pilgrims did a sweet goal gain!

XXX.

One in a vineyard met a damsel fair
Bearing a basket filled with prisoned wine.
The bleeding grape had sealed her to its care,
And flushed was she with bending o'er the vine.
Soft-fingered Summer'd eased his amber mine
And spread its glowing jewels in her hair.

XXXI.

The young man's pulse ran never cold nor slow,
Stirred by the day or lulled to dreams by night;
Now more than ever did it leap and glow,—
And she was but a bloom of soil and light,
No spirit pale from some dim heavenly height
Where blossoms of diviner essence grow.

XXXII.

Sure none could blame the youth for loving her,
The one bright bud that held his roving eye.
What blemish had this sweet grape-gatherer
That loving eyes could not pass easily?
What fault of figure, gait or glance had she
To pain the sight of one particular?

XXXIII.

He could not tell, for love had made him blind;
He could not see, for love's bewildering veil,
A trifling imperfection undefined.
No fancied fault could make him faint or fail,
So to the winds of love he set large sail,
And left irresolution far behind.

XXXIV.

A bride he brought to patient *Naomi*,
Mother to all his treasures as to him,
Who turned upon him no reproving eye —
Her eyes with happy tears were tender, dim;
Her cup of peace was half way to the brim
With only half her world to satisfy —

XXXV.

Her lonely elder son. One quiet eve,
While yet the stars were waking in the west,
He wandered forth; and with each step did heave
A heavy sigh, for burdened was his breast.
Though peaceful was the night, he knew no rest,
Nor would till loneliness had taken leave.

XXXVI.

He came at length unto a city wall
Raised in the land whereto his feet had strayed
When famine hovered o'er him like a pall
Wov'n of black madness, and by demons made,
Beside a murmuring well he knelt and prayed,
And to the nearing stars did silent call.

XXXVII.

One brighter star peered forth, a sentinel
Upon the walls of Night; the cloudless sky
Looked luminous and cold; cold was the spell
Cast by the wan moon rising to her high,
Mysterious throne; and cold it was to lie
Within the purple shadow near the well.

XXXVIII.

Soon maiden voices, melting in the gloom,
Fell on his ears forlorn; and on his sight
A maiden figure leisurely did loom
To halt before the well; in the moonlight
She took her pitcher from its airy height,
And drew the shimmering water from its tomb—

XXXIX

Then stood awhile, steadfast, as one in prayer,
Before the wondrous altar of the night.
The mystic moon hung round her midnight hair
A silver halo, beautiful and bright;
She seemed a missioned angel paused in flight,
While yet her wings were aching for the air.

XL.

The shadow-hidden watcher made no stir,
So pendent was the scene upon a sound.
Entranced, a long, sweet moment lay he there,
With throbbing heart, and sense of joy new-found:
He lay in silence on the chilly ground,
Nor felt the cold, nor knew the touch of care.

XLI.

Then, like the phantom of a tragic tale,
He rose before the vision of the maid.
The pallid moon his burning face made pale;
Pale were his hands upon his bosom laid,
And from his eyes a look of pleading strayed
Against her heart to tenderly assail.

XLII.

"Sweet minister," he said, "I pray thee give
"Me drink,—not of the well but of thy soul—
"Thy fountained soul, that I may no more grieve.
"For other lives rich waters rise and roll,
"Yet have I tasted but a beggar's dole —
"Give me thy plenteous love that I may live!"

XLIII.

"I may not answer thee alone," she said;
"My father's house is just within the gate,—
"Speak thou to him." A silent way she led;
He slowly followed, trembling, yet elate.
The maiden kept the narrow way and straight,
Bearing her precious burden on her head.

XLIV.

Her father's house was rich in bronze and gold,
Soft rugs made from the Midian camel's hair,
And alabaster boxes, quaint and old,
Filled with some precious ointment, while the air
Was drowsy with the scent of thyme and myrrh
And burning candles wrought to curious mould.

XLV.

They entered; firm the suitor's heart, content
Rather to die than linger loveless, lone;
Without an impulse save by hunger lent,—
A harp unstrung, responsive to no tone:
Compassion in the maiden's features shone,—
And on them both the father's gaze was bent.

XLVI.

His voice was tremulous, for he was old;
Feebly he spoke: "What now, my daughter *Ruth*?
"Hast thou a lamb to shield from the night's cold?
"Whence o'er our threshold comes this stranger youth,
"And wherefore? Ah, if I do read the truth,
"Thou lovest him of alien tongue and mould."

XLVII.

She stole into his arms—the outward breach
Of his large heart,—a heart she well did know,
And now by tender pressure strove to reach.
Her blushing face lay like a rose in snow
Against his hair; and, as her cheeks did glow,
Her shy, sweet thoughts came trembling into speech.

XLVIII.

"Father," she said, "I see love in his face;
"His eyes are true; his looks are tenderer
"Than doe's; tonight I met him at the place
"Where we draw water, while I rested there;
"His ways were gentle, and his words were fair,—
"I pray you listen to his cause with grace."

XLIX.

Emboldened by her words the youth advanced
To where the two reclined, and plead his cause
With simple eloquence; for so it chanced
That Love had taught him all the stress and pause
Of winning speech. The old man's visage thaws,—
Silent he sat, by this new tongue entranced,

L.

Then gazed with tenderness upon his child
Dearer to him than even his own life.
"An enemy is camped on yonder plain,—" he smiled
A bitter smile at thought of pending strife,—
"And rape and murder in their hearts is rife;
"Their strength is great, and fierce are they and wild.

LI.

"My daughter's charms are all I care to call
"My own,—treasured is she beyond all price;
"Yet, though a stranger, I will give thee all
"If thou wilt but defend this paradise—
"Thou and thy brethren strong to sacrifice—
"When here the swords of enemies shall fall."

LII.

The youth consented,—nay did swear by all
Of beautiful that Nature knows, or Art;
By the clear moon at watch upon the wall;
By his young life, and by his raptured heart
That he would play the loyal soldier's part,—
To triumph, or with arm uplifted fall.

LIII.

The two came in that night to *Naomi*,
And to the tents of brethren in the field.
The air was moving cold through bush and tree;
But they were compassed round by a warm shield,—
For Love is warm. By Love their hearts were sealed,
And never more could beat in liberty.

LIV.

Brief was the rule of Love, and brief the reign
Of Peace—sweet hour of honeyed brevity—
For with the dawn a vagrant martial strain
Fell on their quietness,—the enemy!
To arms! To arms! —And then the agony
Of parting,—and the youths go forth amain.

LV.

Alas! their hearts were flung on cruel spears;
Slain were the youths defending home and friend—
For their reward, thin, insubstantial tears
Wrung from the pitying eyes they did defend;
For them an unseen incense did ascend
From broken vessels bowed upon their biers.

LVI.

And they were borne in stately funeral,
 With marching, and with music, solemn, slow;
 And wreathèd flowers were scattered on the pall,—
 All that the gentle living could bestow.
 The eyes of *Orpah* with great tears did flow
 While those of *Ruth* were tearless, tragical.

LVII.

Let Sorrow cry the way before these dead!
 The lover's eye is reft of all its light;
 His face is pale that once was warm and red;
 And numb his lips, whence song hath taken flight.
 The hyacinths that press his feet are white,—
 Pale are the lilies drooping at his head.

LVIII.

Let Sorrow have her way, for all is night!
 Where life were needed linger but the dead;
 Their eyes were bent to living and to light,
 But Death their feet another pathway led.
 Now must we lay them in a stony bed,
 And seal their house from human sound and sight.

LIX.

The dead are laid away within the tomb,—
 A rocky tomb far on a hillside drear,
 Where cedars shed a mournful, fragrant gloom
 About the sepulchre: and daily here
 The widows came to weep the bitter tear,
 And lay upon the grave some brightening bloom.

LX.

Anon a Voice came echoing through the land
The magic words: "The Lord hath visited
"Once more the old, deserted valleys, and
"Hath touched the barren soil with seed that spread
"In green among the thistles, brown and dead,—
"And now a golden harvest waits the hand!"

LXI.

The news was sweet, and *Naomi* did yearn
To enter once again the ancient gate
Built high of stone, rough-hewn, and gray, and stern,
Beyond whose arch the street lay broad and straight
Unto her very door: she scarce could wait
The coming of the day of the return.

LXII.

Calling the widows unto her, she said:
"My land is rich again with golden grain;
"The barren land we left with such a dread
"To seek this paradise calls us again;
"Her fields are fertile, and the blessed rain
"Now fills to bursting every river bed;

LXIII.

"And soon the shepherd's music will be heard
"On her green hillsides; deep amid the corn
"The reaper's song will sound; the lark, sweet bird,
"Will leap to the blue skies in early morn
"With melody; and blossoms will adorn
"Her garden walls, by cooling breezes stirred.

LXIV.

"My husband and my sons forever rest
"Asleep upon the mountain, facing their own land,—
"Looking forever towards the glowing west,
"Whose passioned tongue they cannot understand
"In the new world they live in; I've no bond
"To keep me here,—my own land I love best.

LXV.

"Therefore will I make ready to return;
"For on the morrow a great company
"Will bid this shelter-land adieu; we yearn
"To realize a golden memory;
"Yet am I loth, dear ones, to part from thee,
"Companion me until the road grows stern."

LXVI.

A cry rings through the camp; in every tent
The men make ready for the morrow morn,
When they shall end their long imprisonment;
The sounds of joy are high,—and higher borne
By every wind that blows through thyme and corn,—
And all their joyous thoughts are homeward bent.

LXVII.

And in the early morn the cavalcade
Made homeward start. The eastern sky was gray
With the first glance of dawn that soon would fade
Before the golden glowing gaze of day;
And they were far upon their blissful way
Ere the sun's heat a fiery path had made.

LXVIII.

A lonely palm grew near the borderland,—
A resting place for Moabite and Jew;
Before it rolled the desert's golden sand,
And far beyond the everlasting blue
Of Syrian skies, a grateful shade it threw
For merchant caravan or wandering band.

LXIX.

Thereto, across the desert in the dawn,
Thinly concealed by sifting veils of gold,
Came those who by the love of home were drawn
From alien lands to one they knew of old,—
A land which lustful Famine could not hold,
Nor leave to Ruin's hand when he had gone.

LXX.

They came with laughter and with joyous psalm;
In every heart Hope held triumphant reign,
And mighty was their song. — They passed the palm
And all their music died along the plain
As on they pressed, forgetting heat and pain
In the one thought of *home*,—sweet, soothing balm.

LXXI.

But there came three with hearts less light and gay
Who paused beneath the tree and blessed its shade;
For they felt double pain upon the way
Knowing that sad farewells must soon be said.
Held fast by living ties and by the dead,
They could not part without some fond delay.

LXXII.

And so they lingered, mocking the still air
 With silence, for they knew not what to say.
 There must they part, and speech forsook them there;
 Left them with weight of utterless dismay,
 As one, who, dying, having need to pray,
 Can find upon his tongue no voice of prayer.

LXXIII.

Ah, surely now the parting hour had come,—
 And still they lingered! *Orphah's* thoughts did stray
 Across the desert to the lonely tomb
 Upon the mountain, where her lover lay
 In the cold clasp of Death, sealed from the ray
 Of love forever, in a house of gloom.

LXXIV.

And tears were in her eyes. Warm were her arms
 And empty; empty was her heart! To her
 The world was a wide waste, full of alarms,
 And peace was only near the sepulchre.
 There would she sit amid the gloom of fir
 And cypress, warm companion of cold worms

LXXV.

Eating the heart her longing love would keep.
 Yearning, she would transmute the dead heart's love
 Into a living; for 'twas but asleep,
 Veiled by dark dreams that haunt the shadowed grove
 Of Death, where pale, ardorless spirits move
 About in silence—silence chill and deep!

LXXVI.

Her love would give him life, and memory
 Would keep his love aglow,—a guarded flame.
 She turned large tearful eyes to *Naomi*
 And sighed, and called her by endearing name,
 And wept anew. At length the sad words came:
 “Mother,” she said, “I cannot go with thee!”

LXXVII.

Her words were sorrowful with naught of art.
 She wept with *Naomi*, and hung about her neck
 In painful parting.— Loth were they to part!
 They kissed each other dumbly on the cheek;
 For neither one had will to think or speak,—
 Only a vacant space about the heart.

LXXVIII.

And *Orpah* went her chosen way at last—
 The only way her lonely feet could find
 In their devotion to a memoried past.
 But *Ruth* stood silent, for a burning blast
 Blew full across the desert of her mind,
 Leaving her vision bare, her judgment blind.

LXXIX.

It passed, and Thought upon her spirit lay.
 She watched her sister fade upon the sands,
 And felt that she must also choose a way.
 She knew no law but Love’s divine demands;
 She felt the touch of *Naomi’s* soft hands
 About her, and she yielded to their sway.

LXXX.

No need for her to sit beside the grave,—
 She held a richer presence in her heart.
 A glorious peace fell on her, and she clave
 Unto the one whose looks were counterpart
 Of the dear dead's,—as near as Nature's art
 Could make them, or as human heart could crave.

LXXXI.

And then she said: "All bitter tears are dried;
 "I no more feel that love is dead to me,
 "Though my beloved left so brief a bride.
 "With thee I'll live beneath thy native sky,
 "And where thou diest I will also die,
 "And there will I be buried by thy side.

LXXXII.

"Thy faith shall be my faith, thy God my God;
 "And I shall find delight and happiness
 "Along remembered paths thy sons have trod;
 "And I shall feel my sorrow growing less;
 "And I shall know my lover near to bless
 "When tenderly I tread the same sweet sod."

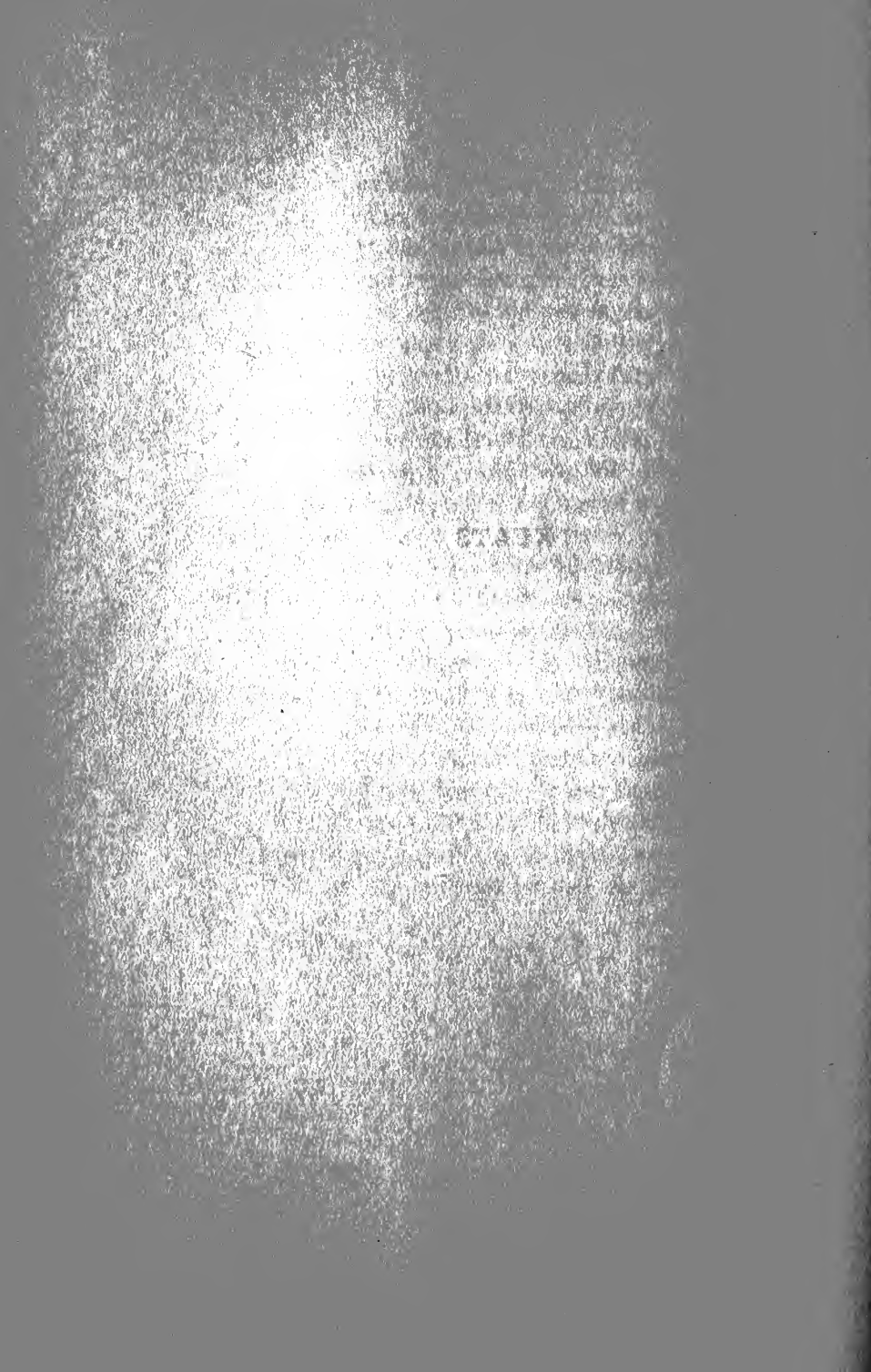
LXXXIII.

The eyes of *Naomi* grew dim with tears,
 As heart to heart, and cheek to cheek, they stood.
 She seemed as one afar, who, listening, hears
 The music of the world and deems it good!
 Then, hand in hand, they braved the solitude
 Of the vast desert, shorn of all its fears.

And so they vanish from the fancy's eye,
And we must be content to leave them so.
This charming pastoral shall never die;
Its gentle story, told so long ago,
Shall live forever, luminous, aglow
Upon the page as stars upon the sky.

January 9, 1907.

KEATS



KEATS.

Out from the purple of a Poet's morn
He came, with all the loveliness of light,
And all the freshness of green things, and all
The dreams that birds try vainly to express;
His arms deep-laden ere he left the night
With fragrant wreaths of song; and with the dawn
He burst into wild singing, scattering
Broadcast the perfume and the hue. From him,
As golden dew falls from the shaken rose
At sunrise, music fell; and they who yearned
Were filled to fainting with the magic sounds
So strange, yet understood. In awe they watched
The charmed unfolding of a Poet's soul,
As to the sun he turned, drinking its wine
Of gold, his eyelids fluttering off the kiss
Of sleep. Awake, his voice rang on the hills,
And echoed through the woods, startling the nymph
From out her leafy bower of cool green,
Drawing anew the piping breath of Pan,
And stirring forth the choral and the lyre
To wake the splendor of a fabled time
Long ages mute, dumb-breathing, slumbering,
In dreams delayed, heart-thirsting for his call.

At his command the sea unveiled its hoard
Of fragments broken from the loaf of earth;
Sweet music sighed; fair cities filled his eyes;
Young Grecian voices mingled on the green
Beneath the rugged council-hall of Gods;
Fauns, naiads, satyrs,—the great Gods themselves
Renewed acquaintance with neglected earth.
Earth's mysteries induced to pleasant paths
His gaily threading feet; his spirit's ears
Were ever touched by melodies unheard
That drew him to the shrine of Poesy.
Her temple crowns the summit of a hill
Green with the garlands of unnumbered loves,
And bright with blossoms poets, only, prize.
But all the paths thereto are paved with flint,
And fiery thistles burn on either hand;
The trees are withered of the pitying leaf,
And serpents coil about the barren boughs.
Soft siren voices whisper to the sense
Of pleasant places to this side or that,
Where Ease sits smiling to the sleeping soul,
And most delightful dreams dismiss the day.
The dead are there, and they who quickly die,—
Lured to eternal silence by false tongues.
He gave no heed to voices at his ear,—
One Voice, heard of the heart, still led him on
Where balm immortal all his wounds would heal.

Within his hands, pressed closely to his side,
He bore his earliest offering of love,—
A wreath of blossoms sprung up in a night
To wither with the day, so soon to break!
With wistful eyes upturned to her great orbs,
Too bright for eyes less pure than his to bear,
He laid his offering at her lovely feet.
Her smile caressed the pallor from his cheek;
Her kiss bestowed a bloom upon his brow;
Her voice was sweeter than the nightingale's,—
Her words resounded like to solemn chords
Drawn from an organ in the midst of hills:
“This way lieth toil, and pain, and heartache; yea,
“Much burning of the lamps of Love and Life;
“Much patient watching, praying through the night;
“Much swinging of the censer in my service;
“Much patient building with the stones of speech
“Those towers that shall mark thy path to me.
“No master at thy back will bid thy bending;
“No task will tremble for thy finger's touch;
“The fire within must ever urge thee on,
“And ever light thy path unto the heights.
“Thy feet must find the way to hidden groves
“Where Sorrow sitteth weeping in the darkness,
“And her thou must commune with, heart to heart.

"Some tears of hers must fall upon thy head,
"Some words of hers must penetrate thy soul
"Ere thou canst hope to herald unto men
"The secrets of this place, sealed to their sight;
"For such as have not seen sweet Sorrow's face,
"Nor felt the utter loneliness of life,
"Nor known the songs that press upon the heart,
"Must ever stand without my temple gates,
"And be forever strangers unto me.
"But thou art young, too young, alas, to know!
"Yet will I hold thee in remembrance dear,
"For what thy young lips say breathes freshness,
 faith."

So saying, with a sigh she vanished thence.
As one, who, wakening from a pleasant dream,
Throws back the curtain which the day hath drawn,
And doubts the picture lingering in the mind,
So he, when she had vanished from his sight.
Then with flushed brow and throbbing heart he rose,
Embraced his lute, and struck the waiting strings,
And o'er the farther hillside took his way.

"Earth's offerings are all for us," he sang;
"The daylight and the dark; the rose and rue;
"The lifting of the lily's head at dawn;
"The myriad eyes of Morning on the grass,
"Kissed by Aurora's rosy lips to light;
"The nightingale amid concealing boughs
"Drenching the leaves with liquid melody;
"The golden glory of the thronèd Day
"Sceptered in splendor over the wide earth
"Ruled by the magic of his lustrous eye;
"Bright blooms that grace a valley's moving floor;
"What time the meadow-lark leaps from its nest,
"And the wild iris nods into the eye;
"The sea's hoarse whisper to some headland pine;
"The mossy caves where mermaids muse mid shells,
"And waving weeds, and sea-anemones;
"The ocean's sadness when the smiling sun
"Dies from its heaven, the ghostly, sulphurous moon
"Following slowly in its funeral;
"The face of Sorrow hidden half away;
"The bud of gladness, opening for an hour,
"To close again when heaven shuts its eye;
"Strange chants of Evening's mournful cricket choir
"When Day is fallen from his dazzling throne,
"His palace fragment-laid, the bronze and gold
"Of twilight through the dusky ruins creeping,
"Behind them grieving Darkness, vast with sighs;

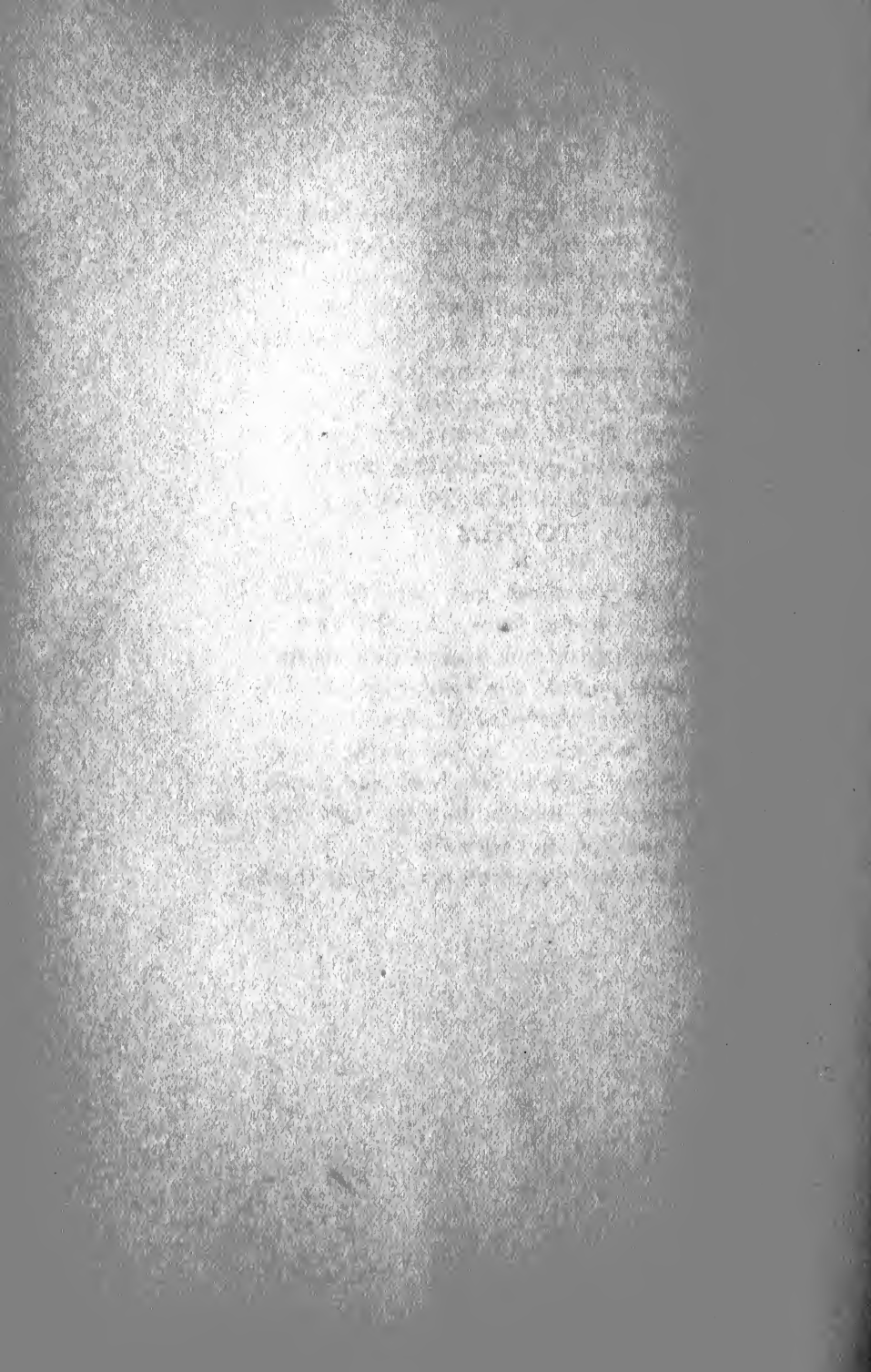
"The moon's clear silver on an icy night,
"Or languorous gold when summer's at its full;
"Thin, leafless boughs through which the stars burn
cold;
"Shy zephyrs on a sunlit slope aye teasing;
"Deep, wind-born voices plotting in a tree
"Some menace to the night, whose sentinels
"Are ever open-eyed,—all, all for us,—
"God-given for the rich delight and fill
"Of hearts that feel the wonder of the world;
"Of minds that grasp the magnitude of stars;
"Of eyes that see in moons a Cynthia's face;
"Of ears that hear earth's music, and of souls
"That hunger for the sea's deep message, one
"With their own mystery all tongueless; souls
"That sit secure on Vision's vapor, safe
"In dreams."

He lived in dreams, and, dreaming, sang;
And from man's lips such music never fell,—
For to him Beauty lifted up the veil
In mercy hung to those of duller eyes
And colder hearts. Though but an instant seen,
Her holy glance fell on him not in vain,
And richest visions filled his youthful eyes.

Though but a youth, his years were Sorrow's years.
Musings of sea and sadness had their hour
With songs of earth and its eternal youth.
The human mystery stirred at his heart
Too late. He lingered here a little while,
A soul too frail, too beautiful to bear,
In peace, the single shade of darkness cast
By its own lonely temple on the world,—
And so he passed, a dreamer unto death.

January, 1906.

TO HIM



TO HIM.

I.

The twilight's purple dims the fading land,
And deepens on the sea. One beaming star
Breaks forth, a timely beacon in His hand,
To guide the seaward bound across the bar.
The faint world hovers 'twixt the light and dark,
Uncertain of its course; for since no charts
Were ever made of that great Sea of Night,
We falter there. Before we trust our barque
Unto its hidden ways, our trembling hearts
Must feel assurance born of larger light.

II.

To Him who rules its winds and tides we turn
With prayer writ on our faces. In His ears
We pour the longings of our hearts, and yearn
With wistful eyes devoid the balm of tears,—
Yearn for the answer that shall loose our fears,
And sink them, weighted, in the muffled sea.
To Him who holds earth in His hollowed hands
We lift the voiceless words that through the years
Have risen to our lips, to suddenly
Draw back, like spent waves on the greedy sands:

III.

"O Thou, whose face no man can ever limn,
"Whose youth beyond Time's reach forever lies,
"Whose majesty no mist of doubt can dim,
"Whose beauty is too bright for mortal eyes,—
"To Thee we cry with our remaining strength:
"Release us from the blindness fettering us!
"Awake the glorious sun's unsealing light,
"And save us stumbling down Night's treacherous
length
"Wherein our earth-light wanders, tremulous,
"A tiny spark against the blue of night!

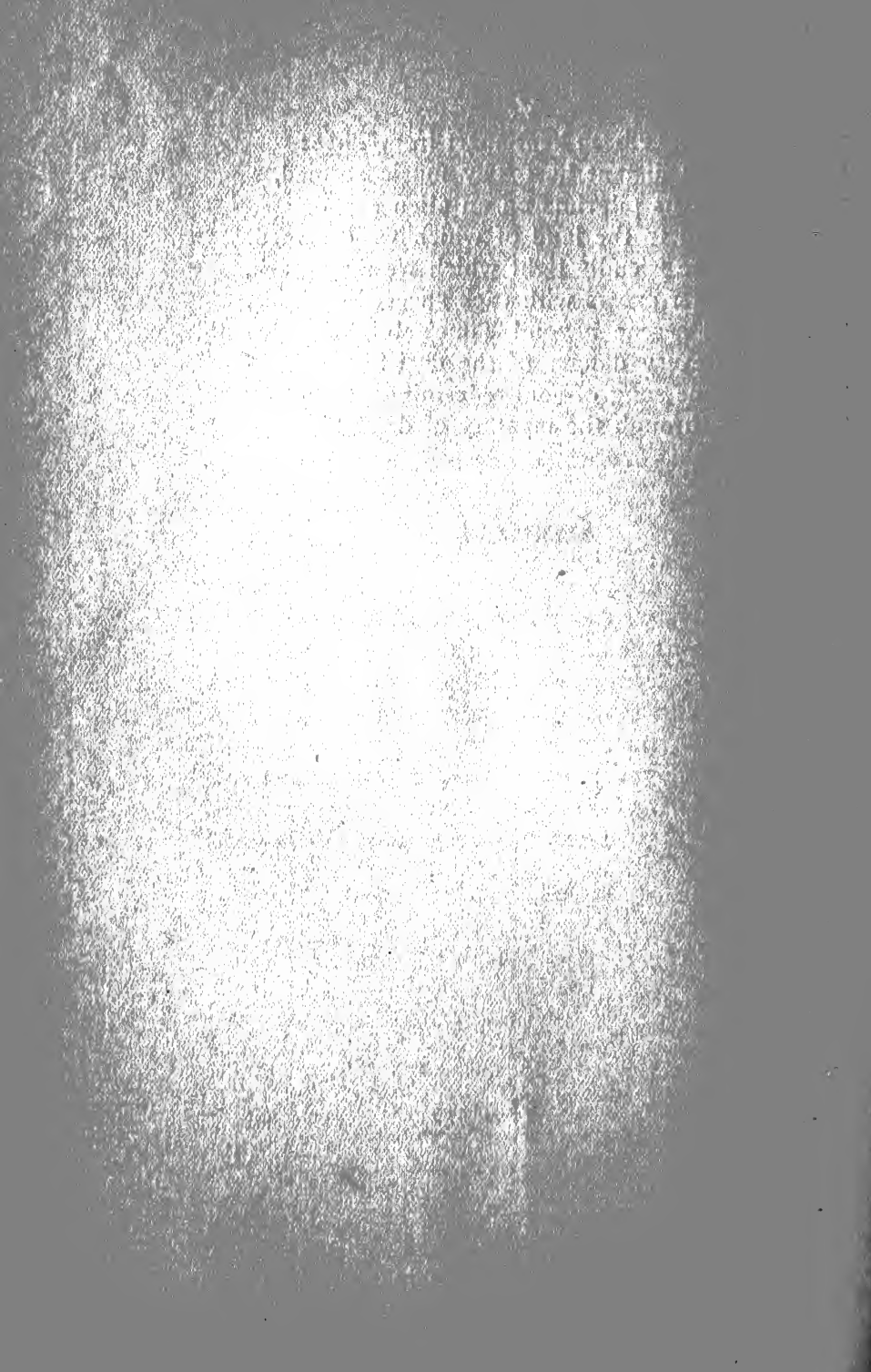
IV.

"O Thou, the master of all harmony!
"Awake the hidden music of the dawn,
"That breaks to beauty, earth, and sky, and sea,
"And leads to song the mermaid and the faun!
"And let it drift across the human lute,
"And draw an answering chord from tuned strings,—
"For we are waiting for its holy touch;
"Our hearts have hitherto been strangely mute,
"Since naught but thrill of heavenly trumpetings
"Can satisfy our need, or move us much.

V.

"So long have we been kept apart from Thee;
"So faint and distant hast Thy music seemed,
"We deemed us pilgrims on an alien sea,
"Not destined to the land of which we dreamed.
"Grant us one friendly light which we may mark,
"That stronger grows with each succeeding hour,
"And burns serene beyond Time's blighting breath,
"Defeating every danger of the dark!
"Grant us one song of soul-redeeming power
"To lift us through the mystery of death!"

May, 1905.



SONNETS



YOUTH.

Youth, like a flower, blooms but once, then dies,
And hides its sweetness from the thirsting air.
Ah, happy flower, if while it bloomed 'twere fair,
And stilled the hunger in some gazer's eyes!
When withered on the grass of time it lies,
No earthly power can aid it to repair;
But, borne afar upon a fragrant prayer,
Its soul may bloom again 'neath fairer skies.

O Youth, how frail art thou! How like a moth
That circles to the candle's flame which sears!
How like a silken film of spider's cloth
That, breathed on, breaks! How like the wave that
 nears
The sands, and, breaking, flutters into froth!
How like a maiden's smile between her tears!

March, 1905.

THE SEA.

Who understands the sea? Within its breast
Seem hidden all the deep, mysterious things
In human hearts: the tenderness that clings;
The latent bitterness of life oppressed;
The joy of youth with love and labor blest;
The laughter and the tears,—all that Time brings
Seems known unto the sea. The song it sings
Seems now to speak of torment, now of rest.

Sometimes it seems a creature full of mirth;
Sometimes a fearful thing without a friend;
But whether viewed in passion or repose,
The sea, from its beginning to its end,
Is but a babe whose cradle is the earth,
Rocked by the Hand that made it and that knows!

April, 1905.

TO GEORGE STERLING.

Thy light burst on us like an unveiled moon
Upon a starless night, when darkness lay
Across the slumbering sea of Song; thy ray
Transformed the night of Night into Night's noon.
The sands that skirt Song's ocean now are strewn
With lustrous gems, once hidden far away,
Which run in jewelled pathway through the spray,
And shake their liquid light on wave and dune;

And we, who love to wander on the shore
Of Song's great sea, shall treasure every stone
Upon the strand as precious, priceless ore
Washed from some barque of dreams to seaward
blown.

Thy pure light shines through Beauty's open door
As ever the true Poet's soul has shone.

June, 1905.

TO ETHEL BARRYMORE.

The night looks with a thousand eyes, they say,—
The day with one; yet that one blots the light
From all the lesser myriad eyes of night,
Makes us forget the dark, and bless the day.
A thousand stars upon the stage may lay
Bewitching silver on the guileless sight,
But when thy gold proclaims thee on the height
They fade to futile pallor, far away.

O Sun of Stageland! Greater is thy power
Than that of all the stars' united sheen;
When thou art glowing none else seem to be;
Thy spell enchanteth for a too-brief hour,
And when the curtain takes thee from the scene
Thy face, in twilight, clings to memory.

October, 1905.

LONGINGS.

The hills call, and beseeching voices come
From fields afar, and one can hear in dream
The distant, drowsy murmur of a stream,
Even in day made wakeful by the hum
Of tragic city voices. O for some
Sweet, magic potion, potently supreme,
Whose power might a precious sense redeem
Which cold imprisonment hath rendered numb!

Hopeless, the longing eye turns towards a place
Where sunshine sweeps the fields with golden broom,
And hills laugh unto heaven in youthful glee.
An old wall grown with roses in full bloom,
Which lay their tender perfume on the face,
Is ample shelter for the heart that's free.

November, 1905.

THE MINER.

Far down in darkness, underneath the day
He delves, the reaper of the under-sown,
Whose toil extorts from hoarding earth the stone
Wherewith mankind may pave the better way.
Poor human mole! Above, the planet's ray
Passes unfelt; in beauty all unknown
Day sleeps and wakes again, while on its throne
The lark,—unheard through intervening clay.

At what expense the greater good is bought!
For ampler freedom some must bide the bars.
So from the miner's sacrifice is wrought
A fairer hour freed from the toil that mars;
So from his darkness springs a ray to thought,
And through his blindness we may see the stars.

December, 1905.

CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE CITY.

The city surges round me as a sea
Let loose by Neptune crowds upon the shore;
My heart sinks in the seething mart's uproar,
While Night's high-looming terror sits the lee,
And silent stars my only beacons be.
Upon a night like this in days of yore
One missioned star a blessed signal bore,
Which hopeful eyes had waited long to see.

The star I wait is still a wraith of dream,
Benumbed of darkness furthest from the day.
O shall my billow-beaten barque still grope
Through adverse seas that drown the little gleam?
Or shall I turn the prow another way,
And whisper to my heart, *there is no hope?*

January, 1906.

ON READING "SARTOR RESARTUS."

So many mantles veil the hearts of men!
So many forms enshroud the single aim!
The world was clothed in darkness till he came
Who deemed the sword less potent than the pen,—
Until his lightning flashed within its ken
And sundered far from every empty name
The gaud and glitter which enshrined the same,—
Then, lo, the world was naked once again!

But ah, forgotten is the light he shed.
The world resumes its darkened robes once more,
Content to worship emptiness, and dead
To any pitying touch that would restore.
Yet one day from *within* a beam shall break,
And blind humanity will start—awake!

January, 1906.

WHY?

Give ear awhile, ye kings! Why will ye heave
A people's welfare to regardless seas,
And fling their treasures to a wanton breeze,
Asking of them what ye would fear to give?
Why will ye, living, not let others live,
Who have no wider interests than these:
To till by day, and lie 'neath pleasant trees
At evening, and a dreamy garland weave?

Too long have we been driven over sands
In quest of that which holds no human good!
Give us the statesman, king, who understands
What One of old, the Peaceful, understood;
And hence with those we serve whose lustful hands
Would ring the lily for a drop of blood!

January, 1906.

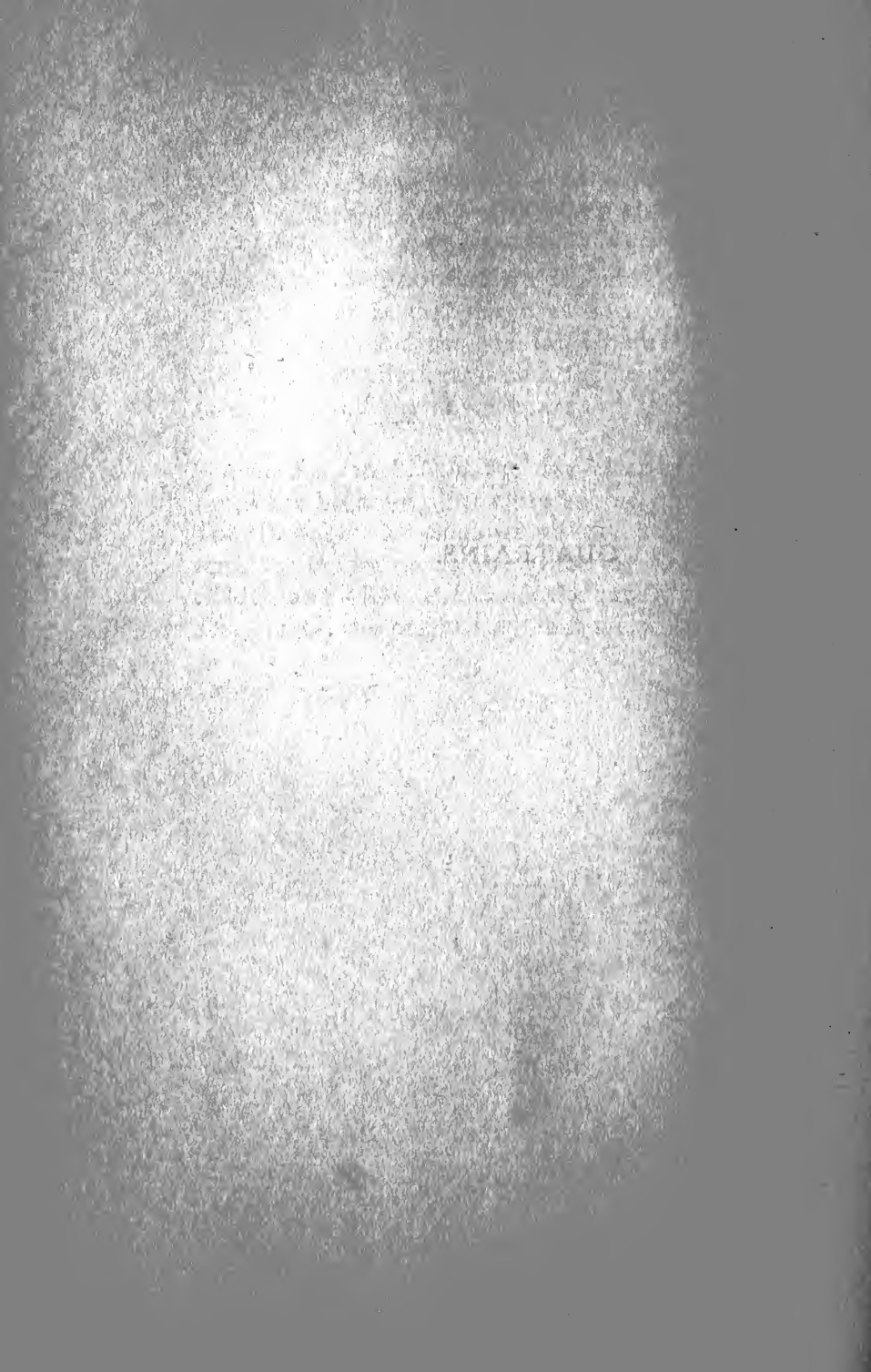
THE ADVANCE.

Man has not slept, but in the passing dark
Has been advancing upward into light,—
Up the long hill of Destiny, in night
More terrible than that which binds the lark
To earth; for in that darkness none could mark
The true way, and the goal lay far from sight.
Man's valiant pilgrimage unto the height
Is ending, and the dawn heaves up a spark.

We in the van behold the day clear-eyed
From the high summit; close behind, the weak
Toil through the shadows to the heights defied;
And, lo! before us on the glittering slope,
Golden and glorious, stands the race's hope,
The Mecca, the bright City that we seek.

February, 1907.

QUATRAINS.



TWO VIEW-POINTS.

A flower on a hillside bare,
Within a shadow,—touch it not!
To us it is a thing forgot;
To God, a creature in His care.

March, 1905.

THE GRAY SEA.

Gray is the sea with ancient woe.—
Though smiles illumine her aged face
They cannot ever hide the trace
That marks a breaking heart below!

AD INFINITUM.

Impatient stood the open door.
The last coin of his life was spent,
And out into the night he went,
A homeless wanderer once more.

THE LOST CHANCE.

Regret hath cast me to an outer hell;
I sit in darkness, ashes on my head.
My lips were silent when they might have said
The little word that would have made all well.

WAR.

A clash of arms, and death; a hush
On horrors of which death is least.
Soon dying ears shall hear the rush
Of vultures crowding to the feast.

LIGHTNESS.

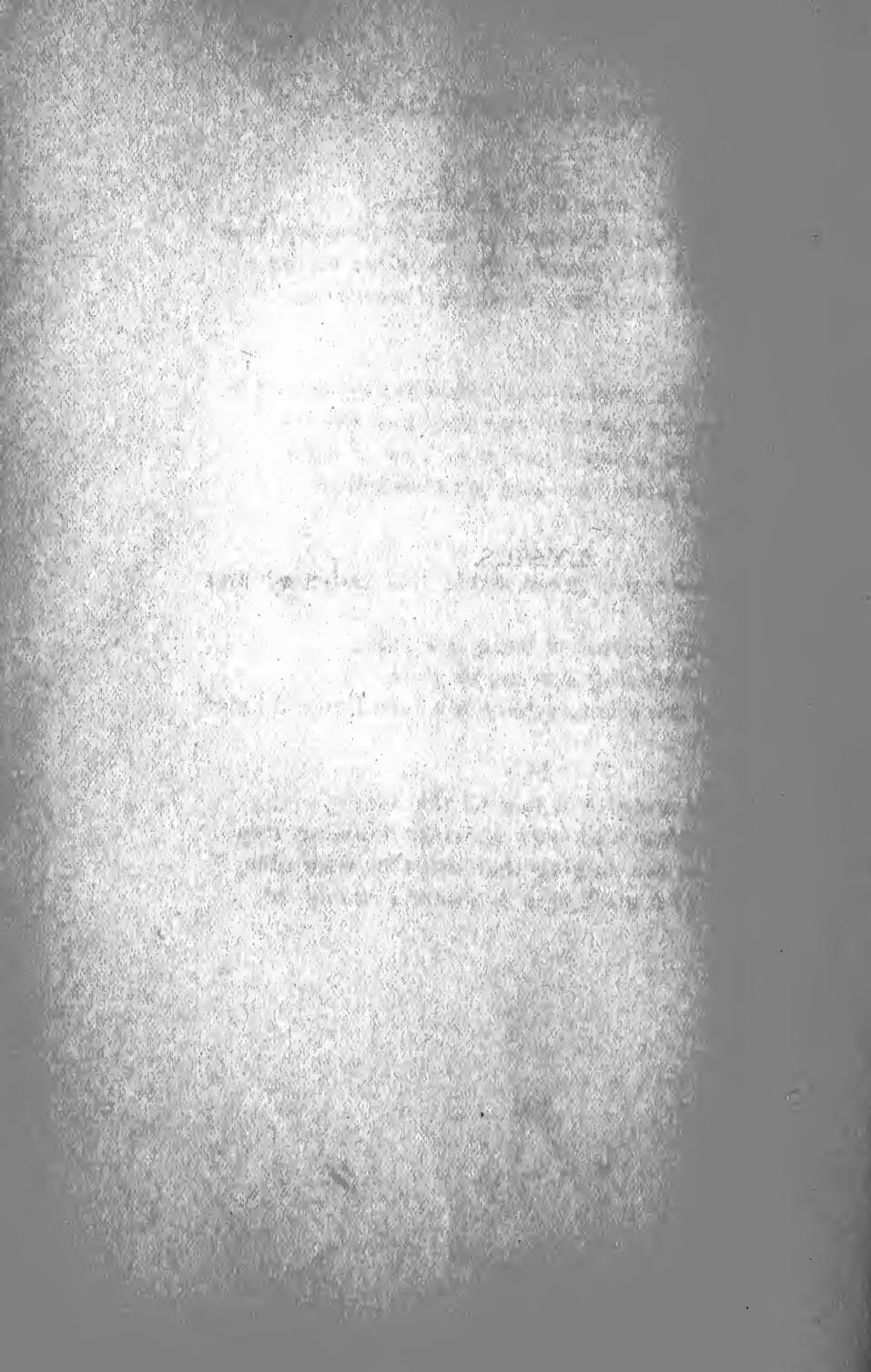
A new-pickt daisy in her hand,
Between her lips a wisp of rye,
About her neck a fluttering band,
And on her hat a butterfly.

DEFIANCE.

Hard against the aged cliffs that front old Ocean's
 breast
Billows hurl their leaguèd strength at some unknown
 behest;
Stands the heroic adamant that never knew repose
Roaring back defiance in the face of ancient foes.



LYRICS.



A SONG OF THE SEA.

I.

O, give me a song or a tale of the sea,—
Of waves running high and of winds blowing free!
With a gale on the quarter, the reefs far to lee,
At the helm of a good ship is where I would be.

II.

Far, far from the shadow that darkens the shore;
Released from the spectres that knock at the door
Of my heart and awaken sad mem'ries of yore,
Shall I be if I roam the wild seas evermore.

III.

Then out where the green fields roll unfenced and
wide;
Away where all sorrow is flung overside;
Far over the shelt'ring horizon to glide
In the path of the moon,—there is where I would bide!

IV.

So, give me a song or a tale of the sea,—
Of waves running high and of winds blowing free!
With a gale in the rigging that whistles with glee,
On the deck of a good ship is where I would be!

March, 1904.

TO THE SEA.

Great monument of mysteries! Thy blue
Reflects the moving beauty in His eyes;
Thy music is the echo of His voice
Calling unto the weary of the world
To come and rest within its harmony.

The heart that loves thee may thy mystery
Unfold; within thy purest blue be pearled,
And in thy music linger and rejoice.
No other voice will ever seem so wise;
No other harmony be fit to woo!

A LONGING.

I stand, as often, on a height
That overlooks the sea,—
The western sea,—before the night
Has fallen over me.

And to my mind the splash of gold
Enriching seaward skies
Is lovelier than all we hold
Of day within our eyes.

However oft from waning night
We lift appealing eyes,
The crimson wing of morning's light
Shall never thence arise.

The western sea, in rose and gold,
Is very dear to me,
But how my eyes long to behold
The dawn rise from the sea!

LOVE'S DOING.

What is more beautiful to see
Than that great light in woman's eyes,
When Love hath solved their mystery!

What is more beautiful to hear
Than laughter on the lips whence Love
Hath brushed the shadow of a tear?

LOVE'S GUEST.

You, who in Love's halls have wandered,
Viewed her treasures, touched her wine,
Heard the music of her sighing
As her eyes fell soft on thine,

You must know the glory hidden
From the stranger at the gate,
Who for just one glimpse within it
Long hath waited,—long may wait!

April, 1905.

LIFE AND TIME.

A shadow is our little Hour
Within Life's lifted light;
A shifting of the lamp, and lo!
The shadow sleeps in night.

A pressure at the heart is life;
A longing in the eye;
A word unspoken, quivering
Upon the lips a sigh;

A sunbeam on a billow's crest
That dies when falls the wave;
A breath of evanescent wind
Blown over Summer's grave.

If life so brief a thing may be,
How firmly should we hold
The treasure that is ours to-day,—
The noontide with its gold!

For all we hold of life and time
May suddenly depart
When Death's voice, passionate and strong,
Calls to the wayward heart.

April, 1905.

L. O. C.

THE STAR.

Yon star that reigneth in the night
Looks calmly on us from its height,
While we, in darkness and distress,
Cry upward for the rays that bless.

Why lift the voice, let fall the tear?
Yon star will neither heed nor hear;
An ever-distant eremite,
It holds no sympathetic light.

To it our earth is but a spark
(Whose glow will soon melt in the dark)
From out the deep blown heavenward
By winds that ever sigh unheard.

April, 1904.

A PHANTASY.

In far-off time, in other clime,
Where blows an incense-laden breeze,
There dwelt a youth who sang in rhyme,
Whose voice was like the distant chime
Of silver bells through whispering trees.

No words of mine could e'er define
What sweet and melancholy ring
Lay in his song. Like heart of vine
That gives its song when pressed to wine,
His sore-pressed heart would sadly sing:

O land where grows the lemon tree,
The lily and the vine;
Where golden shafts illumine the sea
Like amber dropt in wine,—
Thy charms were once my melody,
Thy heart was once my shrine.
But now my harp, once tuned to thee,
To sad notes must resign!

And all day long his mournful song
Fell mute on Nature's mindless ears.
'Twere better far had he been strong
And able to avenge his wrong,
Than thus to melt in futile tears!

THE MULETEER.

Aloft, his vision o'er the desert runs
With love for it and hate for what it holds,—
Across the sands, burnt with relentless suns,
Another caravan than his unfolds.

But yesterday his voice was on the plain;
A king of wide dominion was he then;—
To-day he is usurped of his domain,
And stronger teams respond to lesser men.

January, 1906.

TO A TOAD.

Thou poor, half-living brother worm,
Retreating from my path pell-mell
For fear my steps might crush thy frame:
Perchance from such condition came
Immortal man, who dares to spell
The characters writ on thy form!
Perchance within this human brain
There linger traces of the things
That make thee fit for earth's domain;
Perhaps thou, too, mayst feel the pain
Of life hid in the joy it brings!

A silver moon is on the wane;
A lonely star calls after it
For company,—do thy big eyes
Regard their movements with delight,
As though some great illumined kite
Were drawn athwart the purple skies,
Its tail swung by a lantern lit?
Or do these wonders from thee pass
While thou art blinking at the grass?

February, 1905.

HYMN TO PEACE.

Abide with us, O Peace! Consign black War
To deep oblivion. Heal thou the scar
Left by his wild dominion over us.
With thee our queen, the memory of loss
Through ages past will perish at thy feet.
Allure us to a worship that is meet
For thee, whose wondrous beauty holds the eye
Of even those who, frantic, seek to die
By horrid hand of War. Rule thou our hearts
With thy sweet will, and save us from the arts
Of greed and pride. Awake in us the love
Of noble things. Raise thou our thoughts above
The vain advantages of strife, and lead
Us on through furrowed fields to cast the seed!

March, 1904.

VIOL AND TRUMPET.

The viol's music greets the languid ear
With something of a smile,
And leads the overburdened heart to hear
And leave its load the while;

Then stealing softly through the beating brain,
It bids the tumult cease;
And where the galling bitterness had lain
It leaves the balm of peace.

By other ears such tones may be enjoyed,—
But give to me the breath
Of valiant trumpets wrestling with the void
To loose its bond of death!

Give me their resolute, convincing tones
With power to convey
A stern vitality to yielding bones,—
A spirit to the clay!

MUSIC.

I.

I would I were where softest music steals
Across the troubled spirit like a breath
Of tenderness impelled by Him who seals
A loveliness on things soon touched by death.
Then would I hide me from the world away,
And all the bitterness of life forget,
And all the worry of the day release;
My tongue would whisper what my heart would say,
And I be still a stranger to Regret,
And evermore my soul be one with Peace.

II.

I would the music were the organ's breath,
When in a passion for release it calls,
And no one knows the strange new word it saith
As gently on the heart its pleading falls,—
But not within the chapel's hallowed dark,
Where varied lights through painted windows look,
And heavy-breathing sinners kneel in prayer;
Where vain Religion sets her ancient mark,
And all the truth is sealed within her Book,—
I would not listen to its pleading there.

III.

But rather in my loneliness apart,
With every thought of sin and sinner fled
Back to its native darkness, while the heart
Soars upward by its chosen fancy led,
To wander in the gardens of a dream
Where memory listens for some vanished voice,
And strives to frame the face it cannot see;
Where Night flees fainting from an amber gleam
That lights a vale wherein the Gods rejoice,
And I may listen to their minstrelsy.

July, 1905.

A FRAGMENT.

Whoso has ever loved has known of these:
The tempest, and the plunge in straining seas;
The hymns of peace; the incense of the heart
Arising in the morn, when only two
Are gathered in the quiet of a wood;
The blending of the evil with the good;
The sinking of the old within the new;
The playing of a long and untried part.

March, 1905.

ON READING KIPLING'S "THE FEET OF THE
YOUNG MEN."

O'er the city hangs a pall, dark, immense and dense;
O'er the sea there comes a call (to the sense, intense)
 Bidding me go hence,
 Calling me away
 With the morning's ray.

But the bars that lie between that morrow and this day
Are soft hands that lift unseen, praying me to stay!

January, 1904.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT.

Hell can be nothing but the dark, they say;
The pall that covers hope, drowns the bright day,
Takes from the vision all its splendid sky,
 Denies the lark
 Inspiring dawn,—ah, verily,
Hell can be nothing but the dark!

And yet some seem to love the darkness best.
To these—ah, pity them—who know no rest
Striving to hide some soul-defacing mark,
 Who need the night
 To cover scenes the better dark,
Hell can be nothing but the light!

February, 1907.

THE POET'S MISSION.

The Poet's mission is to rear a flame
Upon some lofty pinnacle of song
Where it may burn, a beacon clear and strong,
To light the tortuous path by which he came.

So that the feet of others on the moor
And mountain, needing just a little light,
Might shun the ways of death, until the night
Is passed and dawn shall make their footing sure.

DEATH'S HOUR.

I.

When Morning lifts her lovely head
Up from her star-watched, sun-kissed bed,
And glides away
To greet the Day,—
Young Day she longeth so to wed;
Who, then, would lay him down to rest,
Within the sleep Death deems the best,
When tables bend
With fruit gods send,
And he might be a guest?

II.

When Day, his first kiss scarcely cold,
Must leave the bride he may not hold,
And forth to aid
The reaper's blade,
And touch the mountains with his gold;
Who, then, would willingly consent
To hide away in Death's dark tent,
When full his hand
With golden sand
So eager to be spent?

III.

But when dear Nature nods her head,
And, drowsy, seeks her twilight bed,
 When through her dreams
 Run golden seams
Entwined and linked with silver thread;
Who, then, would crave a boon more sweet
Than close to lie at Nature's feet,
 And die like a flower
 At evening's hour,
 When Death and Beauty meet?

February, 1905.

WITHOUT YOU.

Without you, love, the day would hold no light;
The kindly stars would vanish from the night;
The flowers would forget to wake at morn;
The rose die sleeping, leaving but the thorn,—
Without you.

Without you, love, no promise would be bright;
Hope's golden sun would darken at its height;
The world of all its glory would be shorn,
And I should be a wanderer, forlorn,—
Without you.

September, 1905.

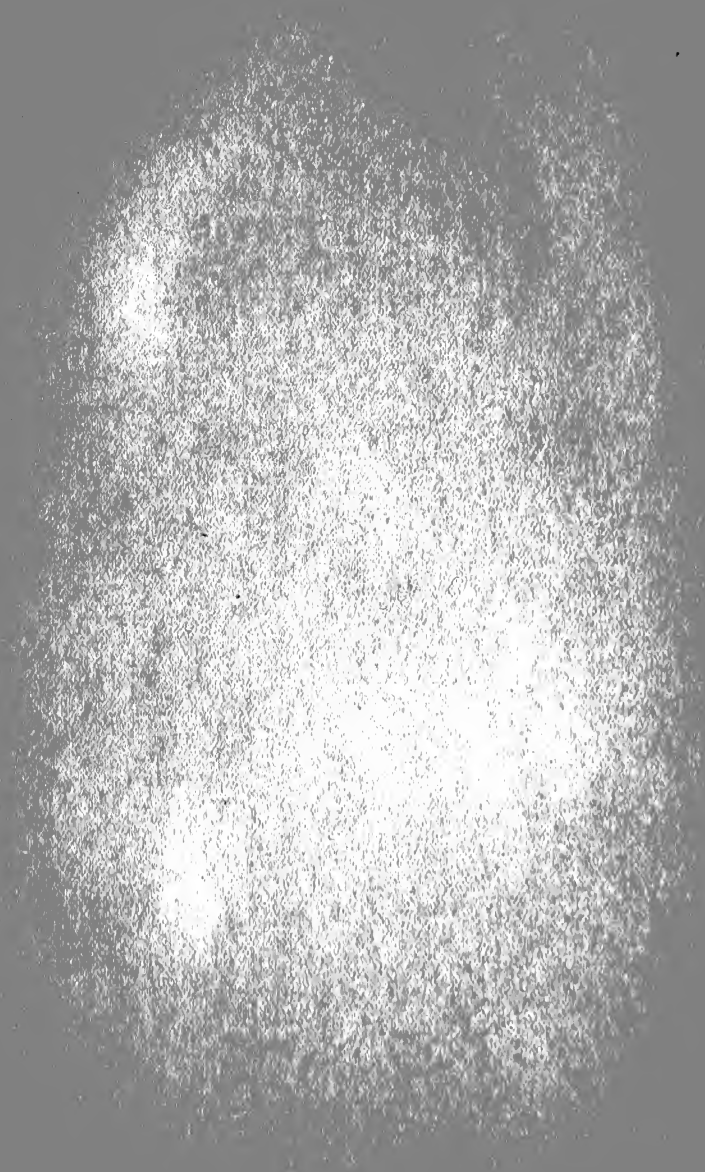
DUMB.

I cannot write the thoughts I think,
The precious things I feel;
Ere paper greets the wooing ink
Both thoughts and ink congeal.

My heart must burst or overflow;
My feelings pass the sum
Of words and tears; but even so,
Nor words nor tears will come!

February, 1904.





JUN 18 1907

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